

Guidelines for Short Distance Transfers/Metropolitan Moves Within NOAA

In order to define and clarify the Federal and NOAA travel regulations on short-distance transfers (SDT), the following information is offered:

The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) states that an employee transferring from one official station to another for permanent duty is eligible to certain entitlements and reimbursement provided the transfer is in the interest of the Government and is not primarily for the convenience of the employee or at his or her request.

In order for an employee to be eligible for an SDT, the agency must determine that the relocation is or was incident to the change of official station. Determinations shall take into consideration such factors as commuting time and distance between a proposed new residence and the new official duty station. Ordinarily, a relocation shall not be considered as incident to a change of official station unless the one-way commuting distance from the old residence to the new official station is at least ten miles greater than from the old residence to the old official station. Even then, circumstances surrounding a particular case (e.g., relative commuting time) may suggest that the move of residence is not incident to the change of official station.

The move of residence must be to the vicinity of the new duty station and be as a result of the transfer. The move must significantly improve the distance and time it takes to get to work as compared with the same factors from the old residence.

Each eligibility request must be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director, Finance Office/Comptroller. Procedures for eligibility determination are discussed on page 4, Transfers. Employees who think they are eligible may apply for a preliminary determination if they desire to know their status before selling their present home. Transferring employees have two years to exercise their eligibility from the date they report to the new duty station.

Entitlement Under SDT

Commercial Transportation or Mileage Allowance for employee and immediate family to new duty post (see NOAA Travel Handbook).

<u>Occupants of Automobile</u>	<u>Mileage Rate</u>
Employee only; or one member of immediate family	.15
Employee and one member; or two members of immediate family	.17

Employee and two members; or three .19
members of immediate family

Employee and three or more members; .20
four or more members of immediate
family

Transportation of Household Goods from old residence to new residence.

Limit of 18,000 pounds

Transportation of Mobile Home or Boat (if used as a permanent residence) to new duty station.

Expenses Incurred in Connection with Residence Transactions when selling old residence and buying new residence.

Selling old residence/purchasing new residence using NOAA's contracted relocation services company:

NOAA is currently contracted with Cendant Mobility/Mortgage for relocation services, which include our Home Sale Program and our Home Purchase Program. A full description of these programs, their benefits for NOAA employees, and a listing of contacts, may be found at our website: <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~finance/travel.htm>. Scroll down and click on Relocation; scroll down again and click on PCS Regulations; and finally scroll down and click on Use of a Relocation Services Company, NTR 302-12. These voucherless programs pay Cendant Mobility/Mortgage, directly, for relocation services.

Note: A chart may also be found at the above website, under Relocation just click on Summary of PCS Reimbursable Expenses. The chart indicates entitlements for a variety of move types and, specifically, entitlements for short-distance moves.

Selling old residence direct reimbursement:

Under the direct reimbursement method, employees are allowed reimbursement up to 10% of the residence selling price. Reimbursable items include real estate commissions, customary legal expenses, title insurance, loan fees, etc. Claims are submitted by employees using our travel voucher form.

Buying new residence:

Employees are authorized reimbursement of allowable expenses that do not exceed 5% of the residence purchase price. Claims are submitted by employees using our travel voucher form.

Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA): WTA is a partial payment of Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA). WTA will be automatically calculated by the Finance Office when a relocation voucher subject to RITA is processed. WTA will be paid to offset Federal income tax withholding for any amount reimbursed subject to RITA. The servicing Finance Office will send the employee a Relocation Income Tax Allowance (RITA) package early in the year following the calendar year (tax year) in which the WTA was paid. The employee will prepare the RITA claim and submit the claim to the servicing Finance Office. The Finance Office will compute the RITA claim. The WTA amount added during the tax year will be applied to the RITA calculation. If the WTA added to the vouchers is less than the RITA calculation, the employee will receive a check. If the WTA added is more than the RITA calculation, the employee will be issued a bill for collection.

Miscellaneous Expenses incurred as a result of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) will be paid in the amount of \$500 for an employee without an immediate family or \$1,000 for an employee with an immediate family, without receipts or documentation. This entitlement is to offset the additional expense of moving from one area to another on items like refitting rugs and draperies, registering your car in another area, utility fees, and deposits that are not offset by eventual refunds, etc.

Transfers

In NOAA, the authorizing official for SDT eligibility is the Director, Finance Office/ Comptroller. In order to determine eligibility on SDT/metropolitan area moves, Administrative Support Center (ASC) Human Resources Division may request a decision by referring pertinent facts by memorandum or by filling out the attached form to the Director, Finance Office through their Management and Budget Officer (M/B). Note: National Weather Service (NWS) employees should route the memorandum through NWS Regional Headquarters. Preliminary determinations may be requested in advance of transfer, but not more than 90 days prior to the projected transfer. Each request must include the following information:

- (a) Distance and commuting time between present residence and new duty station (with complete addresses).
- (b) Distance and commuting time between present residence and present duty station (with complete addresses).

- (c) Distance and commuting time between new residence and new duty station (with complete addresses) for final determination or zip code of proposed new residence for preliminary determination.
- (d) Availability of more efficient public transportation and/or limited access highways for commuting and any other specific reasons to Show that authorization would be to the advantage of the Government.

Agency Responsibility

Servicing Human Resource (HR) Officers of NOAA are responsible for seeing that new appointees receive full information concerning the benefits which may be available to them before reporting to their first duty stations. The Government cannot be bound beyond the actual authority conferred upon its agents by statute or regulation.

Sample Format for Request

A sample format for Request for Determination of Eligibility On Short Distance/Metropolitan Transfer may be found on page 5. The page may be copied, completed, and submitted as a form.

MEMORANDUM FOR: R. J. Dominic

Director, Finance Office/Comptroller
Office of Finance and Administration

THROUGH:

Management and Budget Officer

THROUGH:

Requestor's Supervisor

FROM:

Office: _____ Phone: _____

SUBJECT:

Request for Determination of Eligibility
On Short Distance/Metropolitan Transfer

___ **Preliminary Determination** (must include Zip code of proposed new residence)

___ **Final Determination** (must include complete address of proposed new residence)

Note: a travel authorization cannot be issued without an approved final determination.

Date/proposed date of transfer to new duty station _____

Address of old duty station: _____

Address of new duty station: _____

Distance between old and new duty stations: _____

Address of old residence: _____

Zip _____

Address of proposed residence: _____

Zip _____

(Zip code for preliminary determination)

Distance/Commuting Time:

From old residence to old duty station: _____/_____

From old residence to new duty station: _____/_____

From new residence to new duty station: _____/_____

cc: OFA22 - P. Oliver/R. Wivell

(Please use reverse side for comments)